1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

SECTION II.

OCCUPATION.

241 463 [162] THE greater proportion of the population subsists by cultivation. Cultivation of rice may be divided under two headings, high land or dry cultivation and low land or wet cultivation. The total number of persons who subsist by agriculture generally in the hills, is given in the last Census Report as 154,907, but the term agriculture includes the cultivation of the potato, the orange, betel-nut and *pán*. A full description of the different forms of agriculture will be given under the 463 heading "Agriculture." A considerable number of Khasis earn 482 their livelihood as porters, carrying potatoes to the markets on 439 the Sylhet side of the district, from whence the crop is conveyed by means of country boats to the different places of call of river-steamers in the Surma Valley, the steamers carrying the potatoes to Calcutta. Potatoes are also largely carried to Shillong by porters, where the tuber is readily bought by Marwari merchants, who load it in carts to be conveyed by road to Gauhati, from which station it is again shipped to 482 Calcutta and Upper Assam. Many persons are also employed in 463 carrying rice up the hill from Theria to Cherrapunji, Shillong, [465] and on to other places. Salt is also carried by porters by this route. Many Khasis, both male and female, live by daily labour in this way, earning as much as eight annas, and [162] six annas a day, respectively. The Census Report of 1901 shows some 14,000 "general labourers" in the district, the greater number of whom are porters and coolies, both male and female, employed on road work and on building. In [357] Shillong the Government Offices and the printing press give employment to a certain number of Khasis. There is also a fair demand for Khasi domestic servants, both among the Europeans and the Bengali and Assamese clerks who are employed at the headquarters of the Administration.

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headquarters of the Administration. The manufacture of country spirit gives employment to a considerable number of persons, most of whom are females. At a recent census of the country stills in the district, undertaken by the district officials, the number of stills has been found to be 1,530. There must be at least one person employed at each still, so that the number of distillers is probably not less than 2,000, possibly more. The spirit is distilled both for home consumption and for purposes of sale, in some villages almost entirely for sale. In the Jaintia Hills stock-breeding and dealing in cattle provides occupation for 1,295 people, according to the last census. The cattle are reared in the Jaintia Hills and are driven down to the plains when they reach the age of maturity, where they find a ready market amongst the Sylhetis. Cattle are also driven into Shillong for sale from the Jaintia Hills. Another place for rearing cattle is the Siemship of Nongkhlaw, where there is good pasturage in the neighbourhood of Mairang. These cattle are either sold in Shillong or find their way to the Kamrup district by the old Nongkhlaw road. Cattle-breeding is an industry which is capable of expansion in these hills. There are a few carpenters to be found in Shillong and its neighbourhood. The Khasis are said by Col. Waddell to be unacquainted with the art of weaving; but the fact that a considerable weaving industry exists amongst the Khyrwang villages of the Syntengs, and at Mynso and Suhtnga, has been overlooked by him. The Khyrwangs weave a special pattern of cotton and silk cloth, striped red and white. In Mynso and Suhtnga similar cloths are woven, also the sleeveless coat. In former days this industry is said to have been considerable, but it has been displaced to a large extent of late years by Manchester piece goods. The number of weavers returned at the last census in the district was 533. The Khasis and Mikirs of the low country, or Bhois as they are called, weave cotton cloths which they dye with the leaves of a plant called *u noli*. This is perhaps the wild indigo, or *ram*, of the Shan settlers in the Assam Valley. The weavers are almost always females. An important means of subsistence is road and building work; a considerable number of coolies, both male and female, are employed under Government, practically throughout the year, in

1:Gurdon E-4, 5 (no date) 1907 AR7 Khasi AR7

this manner, the males earning on an average 8 annas and the females 6 annas a day. Col. Bivar writes that in 1875 the wages for ordinary male labourers were 4 to 8 annas a day, and for females 2½ to 4 annas, so that the wages rates have almost doubled in the last thirty years. Contractors, however, often manage to obtain daily labour at lower rates than those paid by Government. Stonemasons and skilled labourers are able to get higher rates. It is easier to obtain coolies in the Khasi than in the Jaintia Hills, where a large proportion of the population is employed in cultivation. The Khasis are excellent labourers, and cheerful and willing, but they at once resent bad treatment, and are then intractable and hard to manage. Khasis are averse to working in the plains in the hot-weather months.

APICULTURE.

I am indebted to Mr. Rita for the following remarks on apiculture in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

There are two kinds of indigenous bees in the Khasi Hills, one domesticated, called *u ngap* (*apis Indica*), and the other *u lywai*, which is never domesticated, and is very pugnacious; its hives are difficult of access, being always located in very high cliffs. A few hives of a third class of bee are now-a-days to be found in and around the station of Shillong, i.e. the Italian. This bee was imported into the hills by Messrs. Dobbie and Rita, and the species became propagated in the following manner. The bees had been just established in a hive, where they had constructed a brood comb, when the hive was robbed by some Khasis for the sake of the *larvæ* it contained, which they wished to consume as food; but the queen bee escaped and established other colonies, one of which was afterwards captured by Mr. Rita, the others establishing themselves at places in the neighbourhood. The hive used by the Khasis is of a very primitive description. It is usually a hollow piece of wood, about 2½ to 3 ft. in length and 10 or 12 in. in diameter. A small door is placed at each end of the log, one for the bees to go in and out, and the other for the removal of the honey when wanted. The honey-combs are broken and the honey is

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Nongwar, thirty-one stills; and Rangthang, thirty-seven stills.

From what has been stated above some idea may be gathered how very large the number of stills in the Khasi and Jaintia Hills is. I am not in a position to state with any degree of accuracy what is the amount of spirit manufactured or consumed in the year, but it is very considerable. The out-turn of a Khasi still has been reckoned at from four to eight bottles per day. From this estimate, and the fact that there are 1,530 stills in the district, it may be roughly calculated what is the consumption annually. Practically the whole of the spirit is consumed within the district. The liquor which is manufactured is far stronger than the spirit distilled in the ordinary out-stills in the plains. It has been stated by an expert analyst that the Khasi spirit contains 60 to 80 per cent. of proof spirit, and that it possesses "an exceptionally nice flavour and taste." The usual price at which it is sold is 4 to 6 annas a quart bottle, a second quality being sometimes sold for 3 annas. It will be seen that the liquor is exceedingly cheap. A Khasi in the villages of the interior can get drunk for 2 annas,* or a quarter of an ordinary coolie's daily wage. Drunkenness prevails on every market day at Cherrapunji, Jowai, and other large hats, and on occasions when there are gatherings of the people for various purposes. This cheap but strong spirit is demoralizing the people, and some restriction of its use would be welcomed by many. In the Khasi Welsh Methodist Church abstention from liquor is made a condition of Church membership, but the vast number of stills and the facilities with which liquor can be obtained are a constant source of temptation to the Christian community, and cause many defections.

GAMES.

The Khasis have many games, but their principal game is archery, this may be said to be the national game, and is a very popular form of recreation amongst them, the sport being indulged in from about the beginning of January to the end of

* About threepence.

15: Nakane E-5 (1955-1956) 1967 AR7 Khasi AR7

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workers and they were few in number.[1] They were particularly employed for such work as the clearing of jungle for new pan gardens in summer.

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In the orange season (December to February) the number of workers increased and they were paid more: Rs. 1/8 were paid[2] for one load (one person carrying 80 pounds of oranges, from an orange garden to the railway station—about two miles). Usually a worker made three to five trips a day. Many workers from Jaintia used to come for this particular season.

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Semi-permanent workers were engaged for wet rice fields. They were usually Hindu cultivators: since these Khasi and other tribes do not know the technique of wet cultivation, plains people like the Biharee immigrants were engaged. These workers were provided with servants' quarters where they lived with their wives and children. However, very few Jatinga households possessed rice fields.

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The economic prosperity of Jatinga reached its climax during the period from 1934 to 1940. Since 1942, the orange production has been decreasing. In 1945, a serious disease attacked the orange gardens as well as the pan-leaf gardens. Besides, by depriving Jatinga, as it had Shella, of their most important markets, Dacca and Sylhet, the Partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 caused a serious economic depression in the whole region. On the other hand, because of the past prosperity, the population has rapidly increased during the last ten years. The serious economic condition of Jatinga is illustrated in the petition which was submitted by the Jatinga people when the Governor of Assam visited those areas in January 1956. It runs thus:

"Since the last ten years or so, with the increase of population in the village and with the loss of fertility of the soil, the people were faced with economic depression. At present they are facing acute shortage of land they have also no scope to adopt other forms of cultivation like jhuming and wet rice cultivation, etc. Moreover, there has been successive attack of Bright's disease which destroyed and wiped out all the orange and pan gardens. And as such, majority of the families have to depend for their livelihood on daily wages. . . .

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It is indeed a serious situation for them, because the Khasi do not produce staple foods, such as rice; their economy is completely dependent on the trade of their products by which they purchase their main provisions, clothes, etc. Other peoples round Jatinga, being jhum cultivators, can at least get rice and cotton: the minimum requirements, staple foods and clothing are available even in the worst conditions, so that they can at least maintain themselves though the standard of living is low. As I stated before, a few households in Jatinga possessed rice fields, but the majority had none. Recently they rented some plots of jhum field for rice cultivation from Zemi-Naga of neighbouring villages.[3] However, its yield was but a small percentage of their consumption. A few

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1. If they had worked in the gardens of Jatinga, they might have got more profit than from their own jhum fields. For one day's labour, they got Ans. 8/. For one month, they could earn Rs. 15 with which they could buy about 4-5 maunds of rice (one maunds paddy cost Rs. 3-4). For one year it became 50 maunds, which was impossible to produce in a jhum field by a single person's labour. [435]

2. These rates, including the figures of note 1, apply to 1956.

3. Jatinga villagers told me that Zemi-Naga were kind enough to lend them their field for a negligible rent, though they had not enough for themselves. Zemi-Naga said that they owed much to Jatinga in the past, so that now they sympathised with the condition of Jatinga, and offered some parts of their jhum field. [427] [628]

241 464 2.10 **Labour and Wages:** It has already been mentioned above that a large number of people subsist on labour—agricultural as well as non-agricultural. Owners of big orchards employ labourers for clearing of their orchards twice or thrice a year, plucking and transporting of produce to markets. Paddy cultivators with large farm engage labourers for ploughing and hoeing of fields, sowing, harvesting and threshing of paddy. It should be mentioned that due to the peculiar agricultural practices prevalent in the district, the input of labourer even for paddy cultivation is higher than that in any of the plains district of the State, which compels cultivators to hire 241 labourer even for small paddy fields. In the case of cash crops, wages 464 are usually paid in cash and for food crops it is paid in cash and 465 kind more usually in kind. Wage rates for males and females are different which generally vary from Rs.1.50 to 1.25 for males and Rs.1.25 to Re. 1.00 for females.

There are, however, numerous instances of engaging agricultural labourers at the rate of Re. 0.50 per day. During the scarcity months the well-to-do farmers advance loans to the poorer section of the people on condition that repayment will have to be made by rendering labour on wage basis at the rate of Re. 0.50 per day in the creditors farms whenever their services are demanded. Thus whenever their services are demanded the poor people have to work in creditor's farm even at the cost of ruining their own cultivation.

There are other instances where the labourers are paid less then usual wages. In some villages where there is dearth of work all the agricultural labourers gather together at some specified place early in the morning. The well-to-do farmers go there and through bargaining manage to engage the number of hands they want at very low rates Similar bidding down of wages of non-agricultural labourers is also prevalent whenever demand for labour is very low.

Land utilisation and cropping

423 659 2.11 **Land tenure system.**—The district of United K.-J. Hills is not cadastrally surveyed and so far as land tenure is concerned, there is no rigid uniform or regular system worth the name, with the exception of those lands under the control of the State Forest Department and the Local District Council. There are different kinds of land under different systems, though for obvious reasons no reliable statistics can be gathered in respect of them. As far as land tenure system is concerned, Jowai subdivision is conspicuously different from Shillong subdivision. However, land in the whole district can be broadly placed under the following categories:—

423 692 657 I. **Rikyntí or Private land.**—They are private land belonging to certain clans or families but not to an individual according to Khasi custom. Neither Syiem nor District Council has got any power over them except the judicial powers to settle any dispute that may arise over any plot of land. The only connection is with the State Forests Department in respect of private protected forests who collects royalty from the produces of these forests if they are used for purposes of

4.1 **Marketing.**—The Khasis and Jaintias are market minded people. Rarely they sell their produce at the farm site. They have established markets at all vantage points of the district to which they carry over miles their produce on headload for sale. On market days it is a treat to see a stream of people with headloads coming to the market up and down hills from miles away.

Markets are held usually twice in every eight days of which one is a 'Bazaharar' day which is held on every eighth day and the other is a 'Chota Bazar' day which is held two days ahead of the Bazaharar day. The following table shows the marketing facilities available to the rural people in the sample villages.

Table B-7 below shows the number of markets classified according to distances from the selected villages served by them and charges per animal for movement of produces from the village to these markets.

TABLE B-7

Patronage per annum from village to market	Distance from village to market				
	0 mile	Less than 5 miles	5—10 miles	Above 10 miles	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Rs.P. Rs.P.					
0·01 or less	7	..	..	..	7
0·26 „ 0·50	..	1	..	..	1
0·51 „ 0·75	1	1	..	..	2
0·76 „ 1·00	1	0	1	..	2
1·01 „ 1·25	..	6	7	..	13
1·26 „ 1·50	..	5	2	2	9
1·51 „ 1·75	..	1	..	6	7
1·76 „ 2·00	..	..	..	2	2
Above Rs 2·00	..	..	..	1	1
Total ..	9	13	10	10	42

No. of villages served by—		
1	market	13
2	markets	6
3	„	7
4	„	1

19: Assam G-5 (1958) 1963 AR7 Khasi AR7

465 419 The above table shows clearly that the producers have to pay heavy charges when purchases are effected which becomes inevitable particularly when the distance to market is very long or the way to the market is difficult to negotiate. The table shows that out of a total of 45 markets with which the people in the 28 selected villages use to carry on transactions, 10 are situated at a distance of 5 to 10 miles, while 13 are situated more than 10 miles away from the village. Considering the fact that transport is to be done by headload only, marketing of the agricultural produce is indeed a difficult task. The transport charges to be paid are also high. It is seen from the above table that out of the 45 markets, transport charges in as many as 11 markets work out to be higher than Rs. 2 a maund.

474 4.9 **Co-operation** - Twelve co-operative societies were met within the selected villages. Out of these as many as 7 were engaged in marketing or trading. These organisations grew up sometime earlier under direct sponsorship of Government but mostly at the initiative of the villagers themselves to meet certain situations. The following statement shows a list of the co-operative societies in the sample villages.

TABLE B-2

Name of village	Name of society	Sponsored by
(1)	(2)	(3)
1. Syndai ...	Marketing Society	Government.
2. Raitong ...	(1) Women Welfare Association.	Local people.
	(2) A Credit Co-operative Association.	
3. Nartiang ...	(1) Trading Co-operative Society.	Do.
	(2) Credit Society for the improvement of the lot of farmers.	
4. Ambi ..	Marketing Society	Government
5. Parbeknieh ...	The Mulberry Garden Co-operative Society.	Local people
6. Mukynshniah ...	Trading Co-operative Society.	Do.

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR? Khasi AR?

428 to the sisters of his wife, or to her nearest relatives if there are no sisters. The rank and titles of a deceased male descend to his brother; when no brother exists, then to the male children of his mother's sisters (maternal aunts); should the maternal aunts have no male children living at the time, then to the eldest male child of his sisters. When no relatives are to be found, the property of the deceased goes to the ruler of the country; or if a man dies leaving no relatives other than wife and children, *i.e.* no relatives on the mother's side, the property in this case also goes to the ruler, who, as the wife and children cannot preserve the rites of the deceased, takes charge of them, and for so doing takes all the property also. With regard to the inhabitants of the Lower Hills or Bhalli, the custom as to succession is as follows:—Property belonging to a subject of Bhalli is divided into two classes—(1) Property inherited from ancestors, which descends to the nearest of kin or to the relative of a deceased person who can perform his obsequies. (2) Property acquired during the lifetime of the holder, which is inherited by the children, whose duty it is to provide for the maintenance of their mother until she re-marries or dies.'

434 MATERIAL CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.—The Khásiás and the
• 465 Syntengs are as a people prosperous. Common labourers, if adult males, can earn wages as high as one shilling per diem, and adult
342 females as high as eightpence. The dwellings of the well-to-do
352 classes are generally constructed of masonry, with thatched roof and plank floor, and divided into two or three rooms. The furniture consists of a bedstead (*charpái*), a mat or two (*masi*), some cooking
342 utensils, and a few boxes. The ordinary peasants and poorer
184 classes construct their huts of stone, mud, or plank walls, with a thatch or cane roof. These are lined with wooden platforms
262 or loose planks placed on the ground to serve as beds. The food
434 of the well-to-do classes consists of rice, fish when obtainable, fowl or meat, curry, vegetables, oil, bag's lard, fermented and spirituous liquor. It may be estimated that the living expenses of an average-sized household of this class would be about Rs. 25 or £2, per a month, valuing the articles of consumption at *bázár* prices. An ordinary husbandman or labourer lives on rice, dry fish, occasionally a
276 little meat, oil, or bag's lard. *Pán* leaf, betel-nut, and lime are essential to the comfort of all the hill people, who are inveterate chewers of *pán*. They commence at an early age, and are rarely seen without a *pán* leaf in their mouths; the females are quite

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1937 AR? Khasi AR?

(2) Cotton is grown on high lands, and ripens; it is sown in April, and becomes fit for picking by January.

AREA AND DISTRICTS OR CHIEFS.—According to the Assam Administration Report for 1893-94, the area of the British portion of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills District amounts to 2,860 square miles, of which only 110 are under cultivation; of the remainder, 1,551 square miles are set down as cultivable, and 1,113 as uncultivable. The total area of the semi-independent Khasi States is given as 3,397 square miles, of which 178 are under cultivation, 1,560 are cultivable, and 1,660 uncultivable. In another portion of the same Report, the area under various crops throughout the entire District is thus approximately estimated:—Rice, 72,880 acres; other food grains, 37,600 acres; cotton, 1,256 acres; potatoes, 33,880 acres. The average outturn of rice per acre is returned at 8 mounds, or nearly 6 cwt.; of other food grains, 3 mounds, or over 2 cwt.; of cotton, 1 mound, or 18 lbs.; of potatoes, 55 mounds, or nearly 40 cwt. The price of rice in 1893-94 was Rs. 2 8 per mound, or 10s. 8d. a cwt., which gives Rs. 56 or £5 12s. as the value of the rice crop obtained from one acre.

CONDITION OF THE PEASANTRY.—The Khasis can scarcely be considered as agricultural people, as they do not grow sufficient grain for their own subsistence, and are dependent to a great extent on imports of rice from the neighbouring Districts. The area is generally considered a comfortable holding for a husbandman in the position of an ordinary Bengal peasant, but scarcely any one in the Hills depends entirely upon the produce of his land for his support. In the Jaintia Hills a cultivator's position is considered to be very low if he possesses no cattle, but performs all the operations of agriculture with his own hands. In that portion of the District, five acres is all that can be cultivated with a single pair of oxen, the average being four acres. A husbandman with a holding of five acres would not be as well off as a small shopkeeper, nor would it enable him to live in conformity to his caste as a money wage of Rs. 8 or 10s. a month. The peasantry, however, as a class are not in debt. The land is owned chiefly by small proprietors, who occupy and cultivate their hereditary fields. The relations of landlord and tenant do not exist in the Hills, and no rent is payable to any one; consequently the principle of Act X. of 1859 (the Rent Law of Bengal) has no application.

The domestic cattle in agriculture are oxen; goats and pigs are

89: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR? Khasi AR?

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used either for food or as articles of trade. A pair of ploughing oxen are worth about Rs. 30, or £2, 0s.; an ordinary cow, Rs. 10, or £1, 0s.; a score of kids six months old, Rs. 16, or £1, 10s.; and a score of full-grown pigs, from Rs. 100 to Rs. 180, or from £10 to £18.

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The AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENTS in use in the District consist of a plough, called *kerpyrtiw* in Khási, and a hoe or *kodáli*, called *cowdáki*. When the cultivation is carried on by means of oxen, the plough is used, the hoe alone being used where the land is cultivated by manual labour. In the Khási Hills the use of the plough, except in a few cow-owning, is entirely unknown; but in the Jáintia Hills, oxen and ploughs are used to a greater extent. What is technically termed "a plough" of land is equivalent to four English acres; a pair of oxen, together with the necessary implements, would represent a capital of about Rs. 40, or £2.

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WAGES.—The Deputy-Commissioner reports that the price of labour in the District has more than doubled in the last ten years. The rate obtaining at present are from eightpence to one shilling a day for an ordinary labourer, and from one shilling to eightpence a day for a person. An agricultural day-labourer earns sixpence, and a woman at the same work fourpence-halfpenny a day. Bricklayers, carpenters, and blacksmiths earn from a shilling to eightpence a day. The new Station of Shillong, the present seat of the Local Government, was established in May 1864, and since that time the demand for labour has markedly increased. The extension of the cultivation of potatoes has also had an appreciable effect on the price of labour.

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PRICES OF FOOD GRAINS.—Of the different descriptions of rice in the markets of the District, the better sorts are imported from the neighbouring Districts of Sylhet and Kámrúp. The local produce is considered fit only for the use of the Khásiás. The price of the better descriptions depends entirely upon the distance from which the supplies come. In a distant market like that of Shillong, rice of the best quality generally sells at from 6 to 7 seers for the rupee, or from 16s. to 18s. per cwt.; and rice of inferior quality, which is only used by the poorer classes, at from 9 to 10 seers for the rupee, or from 11s. 6d. to 12s. 3d. per cwt. Little or no trade is carried on in unhusked grain. Potáto produced in the District generally sells at an average of from 15 to 18 seers per rupee, or from 7s. to 8s. 6d. per cwt. Indian corn, which is only grown to a small extent, is sold

20: Hunter G-4 (no date) 1897 AR7 Khasi AR7

625 In 1835, when British authority was first extended to the Khási
648 Hills, the cost of maintaining the police, from the rank of *jemádár*
465 or head constable upwards, was £45; and in 1840, £57, 16s. By 1860, when the Jáintiá Hills had been annexed, and a *thána* opened at Jowái, the cost had risen to £480. In the year 1869 the strength of the regular police was 149 men in the Khási Hills, and an additional 29 in Jáintiá.

In 1873 the police statistics of the Khási and Jáintiá Hills were as follow:—The force consisted of 2 inspectors on a salary of upwards of Rs. 100 a month, or £100 a year; 3 sub-inspectors and 13 head constables on a salary of less than Rs. 100 a month; and 113 constables on an average pay of Rs. 9 a month, or £10, 16s. a year. The total pay of subordinate officers amounted to Rs. 8340 or £834 a year; and the total pay of constables to Rs. 12,168 or £1216, 16s. Certain contingencies brought up the aggregate expenses to Rs. 24,563 or £2456, 13s. The total number of men of all ranks was 131. As compared with the area and population of the District, these figures show one man to every 16·49 square miles, or to every 153 persons of the population, maintained at a cost of Rs. 2. 1 or 5s. 1½d. per square mile, and of 2 *dewás* 10 *pice* or 4½d. per head of population. Of the total force, 1 officer and 13 men were employed to guard the jail, 3 officers and 23 men to guard the treasury and lock-up and to serve as escorts, leaving 14 officers and 77 men available for general duty.

648 692 CRIMINAL STATISTICS.—The District of the Khási and Jáintiá Hills, like the other Hill Districts of Assam, is administered by political officers, under special rules framed under Act xxii. of 1869. Petty criminal cases are disposed of by the indigenous magistracy, and only cases of a heinous character are reported to the political officers. Similarly, civil causes are referred to arbitration, according to the indigenous system of village *panchâyats*; and the Deputy-Commissioner reports that this system, while affording equal justice to the people, tends to preserve them from the evil of litigiousness.

679 178 In 1874 the total number of cases reported by the police to the political officers was 83, as compared with 63 in the previous year. In these 83 cases, 102 persons were arrested, of whom 72 were put on their trial; 62 persons, or 86 per cent., were convicted, and 10 were acquitted.

Though little serious crime exists in the Hills, yet the number of offences shows a tendency towards increase. The Report of the